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U.S. Congressmen Present Water Quality Update to REALTORS®

Naples, Fla. (September 20, 2018) – United States Congressmen Francis Rooney (District 19) and Mario Diaz-Balart (District 25) presented an update regarding current and proposed water quality management projects to a packed room of concerned Naples Area Board of REALTORS® (NABOR®) members and several local and state officials on Tuesday, September 18th, at the Naples Conference Center.

“The Florida Everglades Restoration project is an ambitious and expensive project that will take years of work,” said Congressman Diaz-Balart, who went on to add that its funding approval was the federal government’s “most generous relief package in history.”

Rep. Diaz-Balart was instrumental in bringing the restoration project to the attention of his federal constituents, and recently co-sponsored H.R. 2691 “Everglades for the Next Generation,” which would give authorization to the Army Corps of Engineers to carry out 1) any project identified in the plan for which a project implementation report is completed, and 2) any group of projects under the plan that the Corps determines will provide regional or watershed ecosystem or water supply benefits.

Congressman Rooney who, along with Rep. Diaz-Balart, recently voted to support the Water Resources Development Act of 2018 (WRDA), a bill that allows the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct projects improving water infrastructure and repairs as part of the Everglades Restoration and Herbert Hoover Dike projects, discussed several key Florida water projects that are already showing signs of water quality improvement like the re-channelization of the Kissimmee River. He also added that there is some growing interest in the exploration of whether boulder layer wells could provide waste water solutions.

Rep. Diaz-Balart added that “building bridges over U.S. 41 to let water flow naturally into the Everglades is another project that is part of the light at the end of tunnel.”

Rep. Diaz-Balart went on to commend Rep. Rooney on his initiative to identify and bring fellow lawmakers to Florida where he provides tours so they can see the water quality issues first hand and understand the breadth of Florida's situation.

"Many of our colleagues own second homes in Florida so they already have a vested interest as property owners," said Rep. Rooney.

"Our work in Washington is to continue to advocate for funding to protect Florida's environment and economy," said Rep. Diaz-Balart.

With approved funds that were redirected from the hurricane relief fund, Rooney added that "a total of \$700 million will be set aside to complete the Herbert Hoover dike repairs within five years. This allows us to hire three more contractors so work is done on schedule. Plus, the Army Corps of Engineers has promised to study necessary revisions to the lake's release schedule and also determine how much will go east and west."

The Congressmen also fielded questions collected from the audience. In response to "Is the Army Corps of Engineers holding up restoration progress?" Rep. Rooney stated that "the Corps is entrusted with removing water from the lake and regulating the quantity that is removed. The dyke surrounding the lake has been determined to be structurally weak and that's what we are repairing now."

Rep. Diaz-Balart also addressed this concern, "We are closely focused on all areas surrounding the lake as it's a big part of the economy. Imagine if that lake were to die. The Corps will continue to explore what could happen if we keep lake levels lower in the wet season, and then do more releases in dry season."

The Congressmen also discussed their work to protect Florida's aquifers to make sure salt water intrusion doesn't happen, and progress on the C-44 reservoir. Rep. Rooney commented that, "This water reservoir is set to be complete in two years and will be located in West Palm Beach County where it will "help clean the St. Lucie Estuary by pumping fresh water into the river."

Rep. Diaz-Balart said, "REALTORS® are at the pointed edge of the spear because you come in contact with residents every day. Your ongoing support of this issue is vital."

NABOR®'s Water Quality Advisory Task Force will continue to be a presence at community and policy meetings where water quality is on the agenda. A second Water Quality Advisory newsletter will be distributed in October outlining water quality progress in Southwest Florida.

The Naples Area Board of REALTORS® (NABOR®) is an established organization (Chartered in 1949) whose members have a positive and progressive impact on the Naples Community. NABOR® is a local board of REALTORS® and real estate professionals with a legacy of nearly 60 years serving 6,000 plus members. NABOR® is a member of the Florida Realtors and the National Association of REALTORS®, which is the largest association in the United States with more than 1.3 million members and over 1,400 local board of REALTORS® nationwide. NABOR® is structured to provide programs and services to its membership through various committees and the NABOR® Board of Directors, all of whose members are non-paid volunteers.

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